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ABSTRACT

The Inland Empire Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program (IE-BTSA) is in its third year of funded development and implementation of assessment strategies designed to guide support of beginning teachers. The IE-BTSA program is grounded in a cognitive and developmental model of how beginning teachers move along the continuum from novice toward expert teacher. The five roles of the teacher (organizer, instructor, learner, mentor, and colleague) are assessed in three assessments developed for the IE-BTSA program. This paper focuses only on the portfolio assessment that is part of the IE-BTSA approach. This program's portfolio purpose is to promote the new teacher's reflection and growth within the five teacher roles. It is a formative assessment, rather than an summative evaluation. The portfolio process becomes a means for new teachers, in collaboration with their mentors, to analyze their strengths and set priorities for professional focus. Teachers begin their portfolios with their induction seminar, and continue them through professional growth conferences and the development of a professional growth plan. Captions for portfolios submitted by 150 new teachers (2,002 captions) served by mentors in the IE-BTSA process were examined. Review of these portfolio entries indicates that novice teachers are able to reflect on their portfolios and identify related role indicators. Dialogue with mentor teachers often resulted in identification of strengths and areas in need of further development. Written records of professional growth goals could be traced back to origins within the portfolio. (SLD)

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The NewTeacher Portfolio: A Bridge to Professional Development

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Perspective and Objective

The Inland Empire Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program (IE-BTSA) is in its third year of funded development and implementation of assessment strategies designed to guide support of beginning teachers.

The IE-BTSA program (Mitchell, D., Scott, L., Sandlin, R., Diaz-Rico, L., Hendrick, I., & Childress, L., 1993) is grounded in a cognitive and developmental model of how beginning teachers move along a continuum from novice toward expert teaching as articulated within the *Framework of Knowledge, Skills and Abilities for Beginning Teachers in California* (Far West Laboratories, 1992) and as proposed by Berliner (1988). Emerging from project data, five teacher roles (Organizer, Instructor, Learner, Mentor, and Colleague) and their 25 component role indicators have been identified as the foundation for cognitive appropriation of concepts of good teaching. Beginning teachers' awareness, enactment and confirmation of these roles are iterated during the support and assessment process. These three stages of an adult cognitive model are defined as (Mitchell, D. Et al., 1993):

1. **Awareness/Comprehension:** Teachers understand what they are trying to do and conceptualize an action because it makes sense. They are unable, however, to translate to practice.
2. **Enactment:** Teachers act on what they are trying to do, and someone who knows what it looks like, an expert teacher, helps the beginning teacher reflect upon and analyze that enactment.
3. **Confirmation:** Teachers analyze and reflect upon the effective parts of the enactment. They can reformulate and predict future outcomes based on the enactment. Their actions are smooth and automatic. Teaching roles become routine.

To provide an assessment system which engages the mentor and beginning teacher in a holistic view of all five roles of teacher, three assessments were developed

for the IE-BTSA Program. A "classroom observation" provides a focus on classroom instruction and organization. A "learning journal" engages the new teachers in reflection on their own professional learning behaviors while the "portfolio" provides the inductees with an additional means for reflection across all five teacher roles, including the Colleague role.

This paper will focus only on the portfolio assessment of the program. The IE-BTSA portfolio process and its supportive documents will be described. Special attention will be given to the connection between portfolio entries, novice/mentor dialogues, and resulting professional growth goals.

The IE-BTSA Portfolio Process

Unlike the more typical professional portfolio designed for exiting a credential program, for seeking employment, or for teacher evaluation; this program's portfolio purpose is to promote the new teacher's reflection and growth within the five teacher roles. This purpose is formative rather than summative as the IE-BTSA portfolio is a collection of evidence which continuously documents growth rather than end-of-project competence. The portfolio development process becomes a means for new teachers, in collaboration with their mentors, to analyze their strengths and prioritize areas for professional focus.

A typical sequence for implementing a portfolio entry connects the entry to the new teacher seminar topic for the day. For example, when the seminar focus is on the Instructor role, new teachers are engaged in an actual lesson taught by an experienced teacher. Following the lesson, the project teacher presents and analyzes the lesson plan

upon which the lesson was based. New teachers, thus are witnesses to an experienced teacher's thought process while planning and critiquing instruction. Next, within groups, the new teachers share a written lesson plan they have recently implemented in their own classrooms. This sharing time provides them with an opportunity to articulate their own planning while hearing others describe theirs. Oftentimes they learn from each other in addition to realizing that they are not alone in their struggles to develop competence in the area of instruction. Informal program evaluations from the beginning teachers indicate that this realization of struggle as a normal part of new teacher development is what they most value about the induction seminars.

Immediately following the sharing, novice teachers create captions (Collins, 1992) which describe their own lesson plan and how it portrays their growth or competence in regard to the roles and role indicators of the project. As they reflect on what the entry portrays about their abilities, they are encouraged to also contemplate continued growth. To facilitate this process, the project's roles and role indicators are listed at the bottom of the caption form. Beginning teachers are asked to circle any role indicators they feel are reflected within their entry. When the caption is completed, the inductees enter it and the actual lesson plan artifact into their portfolio. This process is followed at each induction seminar with a different entry made each session.

In the days following the induction seminar, beginning teachers take their portfolio to a professional growth conference in which they and their mentors meet privately. Together, the novice and his or her mentor review the portfolio's entries, discuss progress and note role areas which may need further development. The mentor

has an opportunity to also note role indicators reflected within the entry. This action can help the inductee more fully comprehend the complete range of teacher roles that they are developing.

The portfolio dialogue feeds directly into the new teacher's professional growth plan (PGP). Within IE-BTSA's PGP, the mentor and novice record professional growth goals and specific actions which will be taken to address those goals. Engagement in portfolio reflection and dialogue promotes the novice teacher's understanding of his or her current competencies and of areas in need of further development. Like the classroom teacher who utilizes student portfolios, the mentor teacher is able to work with the beginning teacher at his or her developmental level due to the portfolio information and the resulting mentor/novice dialogue. Thus, the portfolio is a major assessment piece which facilitates teacher reflection and, along with other assessments, is the basis for growth plans developed collaboratively by mentor and new teacher.

An Analysis of IE-BTSA Portfolio Captions

The described portfolio process was in effect throughout year two of IE-BTSA. During that year, 150 new teachers were served by project mentors. A total of 2002 portfolio captions were submitted by project teachers. Of these, 458 indicated that a related professional growth goal would be generated by the novice and mentor. Thus, 23% of the portfolio entries resulted in specific attention to improvement efforts by the beginning teachers.

To identify the areas of need identified within the captions, all were reviewed with attention to statements dealing with change, concerns, or future plans. Several

patterns emerged related to each of the five required types of artficact--discipline plan, parent letter, lesson plan, student product, and collegial product.

Discipline Plan Captions

The discipline plan captions prompted the highest number of references to concerns or plans for change. As teachers reflected upon their discipline plans, oftentimes they appeared to realize they had planned to react to rather than to prevent discipline problems. For example:

> In the future, I hope to design a plan that is primarily preventative so that I am not so reactive in the classroom but rather more proactive.
>
> I have experienced discipline problems in the last few months. I am aware of what I need to do to keep the class focused... I have grown in different aspects of discipline. 1) I am more aware of what is happening around me as I move around the class to help students. 2) I am more able to get students' attention and lay out the assignment. 3) ...I get students started as soon as they come into class.
>
> The established plan shows that negative consequences have been implemented. In reworking my plan, I need to develop positive consequences for correct behavior.
>
> I am finding that I need more positive consequences posted.

Additionally, some teachers reported a realization that although they had planned for positive reinforcement, in implementation they were having difficulty with that or other aspects of their plan:

> ...sometimes I focus too much on the negative and forget to point out the positive behaviors. I have trouble reminding and reinforcing the rewards they will receive.

Some new teachers also realized that development of their discipline plan might have included more student participation:

> I think spending some time with my students to discuss and write "class written rules" and "class consequences" could strengthen my plan...The class may feel more together if they know they wrote them.

Student involvement is highly needed in developing classroom rules. Many teachers expressed a hesitancy about including students in development of the total plan, but they stated their desire to utilize student input to identify more effective positive consequences.

A final pattern identified within discipline plan captions was that of parent communication. Beginning teachers often reflected on their lack of communication of disciplinary procedures to parents. This reflection was also evident within parent letter captions.

Parent Letter Captions

There were fewer concerns expressed within captions reflecting on parent letter artifacts. For some participants, however, project activities often helped promote teachers' understanding of the importance of parental communication when previously there had been little or none:

> I had no parent letter, or no parent letter was available to me for my needs. My students are bilingual so I needed a Spanish version.

Additionally, some beginning teachers realized that they were ready to implement more frequent parent communication:

> I believe that as I make future plans to keep a consistent communication open between parents and myself, I will be able to create a monthly newsletter to make my parents aware of all the school activities. At the moment I pulled it together from various other parent letters.
>
> I would like to always make this a weekly letter that goes home on Monday. I would like to include student contributions and more tips for

parents. I would also like to make it more in-depth and more professional looking.

Finally, increased parental involvement was a hope of some new teachers as they reflected on their present strategies for communicating with parents.

Lesson Plan Captions

New teachers' reflections on their implementation (or potential implementation) of a specific lesson plan often focused on student behavior problems during the instruction:

> Unfortunately, sometimes, most times this year, I feel the need to scale down the plan. Then it may become dull and lifeless. I feel my current class is not well behaved enough to take a chance on a lot of movement, or group work. In the plan included, I feel the class clowns and current lack of motivation makes this plan very chancy.

> ...I showed a video to my class. It was pertinent to the subject and was of interest to those students who paid attention to it. Unfortunately, not all students did pay attention. I told myself never again.

Other new teachers also focused on students during their reflection, but were more concerned about student learning rather than student behavior:

> I learned that I could have put the students into groups to answer the exercises from the text as they were not as successful completing the exercises as I would have liked.

> There are many nights I lay awake wondering if what I am doing is effective. Are the kids learning?

Student Product Captions

Reflection on student products resulted in realizations that new strategies were needed to assess the wide range of students within the inductees' classrooms:

> I found that as I introduced full length novels and books to my class that it was very difficult to get them to read or pay attention as I read. Due to

> very short attention spans and short on task behavior problems, I was looking for a way for them to be able to read and retain. I also needed works geared to their varied levels of ability.
>
> My problems have come with some of my bilingual and SDC students who are not on the level of the rest of the class. I try to meet their needs through alternative forms of assessment, but it is still difficult because of the extra work it is for me. I need more work in assessing students' skills and providing remediation and acquiring knowledge about diverse student characteristics.

Some teachers also expressed concern about the amount of time it took to review student work:

> It was very time consuming for me as a teacher. The proofing and editing, the one on one with each student throughout the process was difficult, and yet I wanted them to learn the process of writing, the pride in a job well done, and more and more about correct writing...

Collegial Product Captions

There were few concerns expressed with regard to working with colleagues. The two basic patterns that emerged were frustration over shared work space or concern about colleagues who appeared to be less than willing to interact:

> Other teachers often use my classroom for makeup test space, or pull out my students to do extra work....This challenges my creativity.
>
> This year has been a real test of my ability to get along and work with colleagues. I was in the position of rover and "tracked" into another teacher's classroom every four weeks.
>
> I have found that its hard when you work with teachers that don't want to work with you. My buddy teacher does not like to work with others unless she gets to do less work.

Mentor Follow Up

While some captions clearly described the novice teacher's goals for future efforts, others simply reflected on questions or concerns. In either case, it was the

mentor's responsibility to promote related discussion and creation of a professional growth goal and its related action plan.

For example, when the beginning teacher expressed concern about consistency in disciplinary actions, the mentor might record "develop consistency in implementation of the discipline plan" as the professional growth goal. Related action plans might include the following:

1. Analyze my positive and negative consequences to determine which ones are not presently being utilized.
2. Hold discussion with class to allow for their input on more motivating positive consequences.
3. Revise positive and negative consequences, post in room, and review with class.
4. Be observed by mentor on 11/10/96 with focus on consistency in disciplinary actions.

The mentor also takes note of any actions he/she will take to support the beginning teacher efforts with regard to the goal. For example, sample discipline plans and related reading materials might be provided.

Role Indicator Analysis

New teachers were asked to note any role indicators they believed were addressed within each entered portfolio artifact. In follow up discussion with their mentors, additional indicators might be discussed and noted. This would most likely occur when the mentor felt the beginning teacher needed further understanding of particular role indicators.

A review of the noted indicators reveals the portfolio's ability to promote reflection across the total range of teacher roles and role indicators. As noted within Figure A, teachers were able to identify each of the 25 role indicators within their

reflection of the five required artifacts.

Conclusions

Review of new teachers' portfolios indicates that novice teachers are able to reflect upon their portfolio entries and identify the related role indicators. Dialogue with mentor teachers often resulted in identification of indicated strengths in addition to areas in need of further development. Written records of professional growth goals could often be traced back to origins within the portfolio.

Educational Importance

Though teacher portfolios have been prevalent in the literature within the past decade, we have found no evidence of other formal induction portfolio processes. The described program attains formal connection to the new teacher's Professional Growth Plan through mentor mediation. This process has potential to move teacher portfolios beyond professional records of competence to professional records of reflection for growth. This important use of portfolios, while in further need of study, has the potential to greatly benefit the growth of both new and experienced teachers.

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Figure A

Roles & Indicators	Discipline Plan	Parent Letter	Lesson Plan	Student Product	Colleague
Organizer					
--Setting & communicating long range plans	26 (21%)	54 (44%)	15 (12%)	12 (10%)	16 (13%)
--Organizing procedures, routines, environment	63 (32%)	64 (33%)	32 (16%)	21 (11%)	15 (8%)
--Grouping for maximum student engagement	11 (14%)	9 (12%)	31 (40%)	21 27%)	6 (8%)
--Promoting positive climate & discipline	75 (40%)	55 (29%)	25 (13%)	22 (12%)	10 (5%)
--Creating community & resolving conflicts	43 (41%)	30 (29%)	13 (12%)	10 (10%)	9 (9%)
Instructor					
--Setting objectives & sequencing instruction	15 (13%)	21 (19%)	44 (39%)	23 (20%)	10 (9%)
--Involving students' background, interests, & prior knowledge	9 (10%)	7 (7%)	34 (36%)	36 (38%)	9 (10%)
--Teaching w/ variety	5 (4%)	10 (9%)	49 (43%)	38 (33%)	13 (11%)
--Responding w/ a range of activities	5 (8%)	7 (11%)	22 (34%)	22 (34%)	9 (14%)
--Assessing progress & replanning	13 (19%)	6 (9%)	17 (25%)	28 (41%)	5 (7%)
Mentor					
--Assessing students' skills & providing remediation	7 (8%)	10 (12%)	23 (27%)	40 (47%)	5 (6%)
--Adjusting instructional sequence for individual needs	9 (14%)	6 (10%)	20 (32%)	25 (40%)	3 (5%)
--Modifying teacher speech w/ linguistically diverse students	1 (4%)	3 (13%)	7 (30%)	9 (39%)	3 (13%)
--Building lessons compatible w/ students' culture	7 (17%)	3 (7%)	11 (26%)	15 (36%)	6 (14%)
--Developing individual creativity & problem solving	10 (15%)	3 (5%)	20 (30%)	28 (42%)	5 (8%)

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Learner					
--Acquiring & applying knowledge in content areas	3 (6%)	6 (11%)	18 (34%)	14 (26%)	11 (21%)
--Acquiring new pedagogical concepts & language	5 (22%)	4 (17%)	3 (13%)	9 (39%)	2 (9%)
--Framing & grappling w/ complex issues	9 (27%)	7 (21%)	4 (3%)	8 (24%)	6 (18%)
--Connecting content to students' experience & level	6 (10%)	7 (12%)	23 (38%)	23 (38%)	2 (3%)
--Acquiring knowledge about diverse student characteristics	6 (20%)	4 (13%)	6 (20%)	9 (30%)	4 (13%)
Colleague					
--Collaborating w/ colleagues to solve problems	14 (19%)	12 (16%)	7 (9%)	4(5%)	38 (51%)
--Providing service to school & colleagues	3 (6%)	4 (9%)	2 (4%)	3 (6%)	35 (75%)
--Drawing on community to enrich the classroom	4 (12%)	12 (36%)	3 (9%)	4 (12%)	10 (30%)
--Mobilizing & sharing resources	5 (9%)	5 (9%)	9 (15%)	6 (10%)	33 (56%)
--Enlisting parental support	24 (21%)	68 (59%)	2 (2%)	9(8%)	13 (11%)

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